

## **DISSECT: The Word Identification Strategy**

### **Intervention Summary:**

The purpose of this intervention is to help struggling readers in the identification of unfamiliar words. This intervention can be used at all tiers. It is mainly aimed toward students with learning disabilities. This intervention is suggested for use with adolescents (students in junior high and high school).

### **Materials Needed**

- a list of the steps in DISSECT
- a dictionary
- a list of prefixes and suffixes
- a list of the Rules of Twos and Threes.

The lists for the steps, prefixes and suffixes, and the Rules of Twos and Threes may be provided as individual lists for each student, on a posterboard that all children can see, or both.

### **Procedures:**

#### *Obtaining Baseline Data*

Before this intervention is implemented, baseline data should be collected. Those who are implementing the intervention can gather baseline information by determining each student's oral reading fluency and reading comprehension scores. The authors of the article suggest selecting a 400-word passage appropriate for the child's reading level from the Timed Readings series. The student's reading accuracy percentage can then be determined by dividing the number of correctly-read words by the total number of words in the passage. Baseline data may also be obtained by using reading measures from DIBELS or AIMSWeb.

There should be at least three data points collected for baseline before the intervention is implemented. After the baseline data have been collected, plot the data along with the goal line on the chart and give to the teacher so he/she can plot the weekly progress monitoring data.

#### *Intervention Steps*

1. The DISSECT mnemonic should be explained to the students:

##### **D – DISCOVER THE CONTENT**

- this requires the student to ignore the unknown word and read the content following the word.
- The student then uses the content of the sentence to try to determine what word could fit in place of the unfamiliar word.
- If the student's guess does not fit, the student then moves to the next step.

##### **I – ISOLATE THE PREFIX**

- The student looks at the beginning of the word to see if there is a prefix phoneme they are able to pronounce.
- This is where the list of prefixes comes into play.
- If the student is able to find a prefix, they are instructed to separate it from the rest of the word by drawing a box around it.

S – SEPARATE THE SUFFIX

- The student is then instructed to look at the end of the word to see if there is a suffix. They are able to use the list of suffixes for this part.
- If the student is able to find a suffix, they are instructed to separate it from the rest of the word by drawing a box around it.

S – SAY THE STEM

- The student should then try to say the stem of the word.
- If the student recognizes the stem, they are instructed to say the prefix, stem, and suffix together.
- If the student does not recognize the stem, they should move to the next step.

E – EXAMINE THE STEM

- The student should use the Rule of Rules of Two and Threes in order to separate the stem into manageable, easy-to-say segments
- *THE RULES OF TWOS AND THREES*
  - When the stem begins with a vowel, the first two letters should be separated. Pronunciation should be attempted again after this.
  - When the stem begins with a consonant, the first three letters should be separated. Pronunciation should be attempted again after this.
  - If the stem is still not recognizable, the student should ignore the word's first letter and use the aforementioned rules for the rest of the word.
  - If the student is still unable to identify the word after completing these steps, the student should then move on to the next steps.

C – CHECK WITH SOMEONE

- The student is instructed to go and check with someone to see if they can help in the identification of the word (teacher, classmate, parent, etc.)

T – TRY THE DICTIONARY

- The student can also use a dictionary to look up the word, discover the correct way to pronounce the word, and read the definition.

2. Conduct a discussion about when and where the strategy can be used. For example, this strategy would be very useful when students are trying to complete homework assignments in which there are unfamiliar words. Also, discuss how this strategy is advantageous. It can be discussed how this strategy would help students' grades, decrease frustration or confusion, and allow for better reading experiences.
3. The strategy should be modeled. Using a chalkboard or large piece of paper, a word from the students' textbook or other reading assignment should be written down and the strategy should be demonstrated. While demonstrating the strategy, each step should be narrated so students develop a good understanding of what should be done when this strategy is utilized.
4. New words should be selected. Students are then offered the opportunity to demonstrate the strategy to their peers. Students who are demonstrating should be encouraged to narrate what they are doing as they do it. Appropriate feedback should be provided.

## **Progress Monitoring:**

Weekly probes should be administered and the scores should also be plotted on the graph for progress monitoring. Review the progress monitoring data each week. If the progress monitoring data points are below the goal line three times in a row, the intervention plan needs to be reviewed to determine if changes in the intervention or goal need to be made.

In addition to utilizing weekly probes, the following intervention implementation checklist should be utilized to measure treatment integrity and to ensure all intervention steps have been implemented as intended.

### *Intervention Implementation Checklist*

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Give (or present) students with a list of the DISSECT steps, a list of prefixes and suffixes, and the list of the Rules of Twos and Threes. | Yes or No |
| 2. Describe and model each step in DISSECT.  | Yes or No |
| 3. Discuss situations in which the DISSECT strategy can be utilized.   | Yes or No |
| 4. Demonstrate the DISSECT strategy while stating what you are doing with each step.   | Yes or No |
| 5. Have students demonstrate the DISSECT strategy while providing appropriate feedback.  | Yes or No |

## **Alternate Ideas/Variations:**

Though this strategy is aimed toward students with learning disabilities, it would also be able to be used with those without disabilities. For example, this strategy could be a part of basic classroom instruction at a Tier 1 level. It could also be used with a group of students in a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. In addition to this, this strategy need not be limited to reading classes; it can extend to science, social studies, etc.

## **Based On:**

Lenz, B.K., & Hughes, C.A. (1990). A word identification strategy for adolescents with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 23, 149-158, 163.

Bryant, D.P., Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., Ugel, N., Hamff, A., & Hougen, M. (2000). Reading outcomes for students with and without reading disabilities in general education middle-school content area classes. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 23(4), 238-252.

Bryant, D.P., Ugel, N., Thompson, S., & Hamff, A. (1999). Instructional strategies for content-area reading instruction. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 34(5), 293.